(b) whether the Foreign officials of both the countries had recently discussed bi-lateral ties between both the countries; and

(c) if so, the details of areas of mutual interest identified by both the countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) During Prime Minister,s visit to the US in May *1994, President Clinton and Prime Min*ister called for a new partnership between India and the United States and agreed to expand the pace and scope of high-level exchanges on the full range of political, economic, commercial, scientific, technological and social affairs.

(b) and (c) Foreign Policy Consultations between senior officials of Ministry of External Affairs and the US State Department were held in New Delhi on April 3-4, 1995 as part of the on-going process of expanding and deepening relations between India and the US. The State Department delegation was led by Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Mr. Peter Tarnoff and the Indian side was led by the Foreign Secretary. Discussions covered regional integration, including the European security architecture, APE, ASEAN, SAARC and the Indian Ocean Rim; multilateral issues such as UN reforms and Security Council expansion, peace keeping, UNGA issues and the NPT review conference, and regional issues such as the Middle East Peace Process, the Gulf, Central Asia, Afghanistan, North East Asia, South East Asia and South Asia.

Issues of bilateral interest also came up for discussion during Under Secretary Tarnoff's meetings with Prime Minister, External Affairs Minister and Principal Secretary to Prime Minister.

Setting the Indo-China borders issue

3606. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether steps had been initiated by Government to settle Indo-China border dispute;

(b) if so, the progress made so far;

(c) what is the present situation;

(d) when the next Indo-China talks proposed to discuss this issue; and

(e) the details of any other alternative steps proposed to be taken to settle Indo-China border dispute?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS *(SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) to (e)* The India-China Joint Working Group (JWG), established during the visit of the former Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi to China in December 1988, was tasked to create a favourable climate and conditions for a fair and reasonable settlement of the boundary question, while seeking a mutually acceptable solution to this question.

Discussions in the JWG resulted in the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control in the India-*China Border Areas, which was signed* during Prime Minister Shri P. V. Narasimha Rao's visit to China in September 1993. Implementation measures for this Agreement are being discussed in the JWG and the India-China Expert Group.

The boundary question was addressed at the seventh meeting of the JWG, held in Beijing on July 6-7, 1994. The next meeting is scheduled to be held in New Delhi at a mutually convenient date later this year. India and China are committed to continue to work towards a resolution of the boundary question in the JWG. In the meantime, they are also taking steps to ensure that the situation along their border areas remains peaceful.